

NORTHWEST TEMPE COMMUNITY PLAN

FOCUS GROUP – Tuesday March 22, 2005

Westside Multigenerational Building; 715 W. 5th Street; Tempe
Meeting Summary Notes

Meeting Participants: Therese "PD" Lucier
Jenny Lucier
Douglas Denczner
Rich Bank
Robert Sandstedt
Leslie Roe
Amanda Robles
Joanna Hensley
Trevor Berger
Tom Hinchion
Mark Lymer
Beth Hoffman
John Minett
Kirby Spitler
Bob Gray
Betsy Gait
Karyn Gitlis

The following meeting notes are intended to be a summary of the discussions at the meeting.

Peggy Fiandaca, President of Partners for Strategic Action, Inc. explained that she was hired by the City of Tempe to work with the neighborhood to complete the Northwest Tempe Community Plan. She thanked everyone for taking time to come to this meeting to discuss issues, concerns, and ideas to improve the neighborhood. She asked how many people attending had been involved in past planning efforts. The majority of people raised their hands. However, there were several residents that were new to the neighborhood planning process. Therefore, Peggy gave a broad overview of past planning efforts and explained the purpose of the community plan.

Peggy explained the difference between the various types of plans that can pertain to neighborhoods and the relationship to the Tempe General Plan 2030. She also described the anticipated schedule for completion of the Northwest Tempe Community Plan.

Peggy explained that the purpose of the focus group is to understand neighborhood issues, concerns, and potential ideas for improvement to the neighborhood. Particularly, the focus group is intended to communicate those issues that should be addressed in the draft plan. Following is a summary of the focus group discussions.

A. INTRODUCTIONS

All participants were asked to identify what they like about the neighborhood and what things they would like to see changed.

THINGS I LIKE ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD	THINGS I WOULD CHANGE ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD
Eclectic nature and history of the area.	Process by which you decide zoning ordinances and growth plan.
Big trees	Get away from idea that we have to grow; dynamic (area).
Location	Fast traffic – diverted traffic due to speed.
It is the anecdote to sprawl.	More livable.
Location	Don't focus on growth.
Historic nature – a lot of charm.	The number and quality of rentals.
Town is open and awake when I get home at night; there are a variety of experiences at any time.	Community in transition – could be great or bad.
Diversity of the area.	Neighborhood in transition – as a group, we could be out front.
Reconnecting with old friends; sense of community.	House and car broken into less often.
Straw bale houses.	Policies that promote sustainability – economic, environmental, etc.
Historic homes	Rental situation – causes too many problems.
Trees	More people building with alternate building techniques.
Location and historic character.	Mentality of “more” density, buildings, etc.
Temperature – ability to ride bike, etc. – cool waves of air that move through the area.	City staff use the document in place as a starting point for development.
Neighbors – character, uniqueness.	Not have to work so hard to preserve such a great thing.

Character of neighborhood.	Greedy, grab-land mentality – it has reared its ugly head in the neighborhood.
Sense of community.	Inconsistency in how City has followed the plan and their attitude.
Irrigation, nature, and foliage.	City not designating this as a historic neighborhood.
Neighborhood feeling – we watch out for each other.	Traffic – lack of enforcement or planning.
Be at gate at airport in 10 minutes.	Lack of planning – incentives, etc.
It takes 5 minutes by walking to get to my seat at Gammage	City staff – changing plans and not reflecting the area.
Community spirit.	Process – sense is that we have to fight for everything.
	Traffic

B. ISSUES THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED

The participants identified those issues that must be addressed in the development of the Northwest Tempe Community Draft Plan. The group brainstormed a list. The exercise was not intended to reach any consensus on issues but to identify a comprehensive list of issues.

What are the important things that the Northwest Tempe Community Plan must address?

- Lack of a comprehensive development plan.
- Non-automotive transport – the preferred and funded mode.
- Citizen-driven process.
- A columnist – that is not driven by developers.
- Plan has to be used.
- Development does not follow adopted plan.

C. ISSUE DISCUSSION

The participants took the items identified previously and discussed them in more detail. They brainstormed the specific items that should be explored within each of the issue topics.

Livability/Character

- Plan should provide guidelines for work, live, learn, and play in the neighborhood.
- Ability to walk across any street without fear is important.

- Walk to basic goods and services.
- Need to address availability of basic goods and services, i.e., grocery store.
- Require design guides or sketch plan as part of their submittal for review; they should show how the development will meet guidelines.
- Resolve social dynamics and what we want for our neighborhood within the reality of current trends.
- We want very specialized “things” for our neighborhood.
- Explain how things could be resolved that are sensitive to the neighborhood.
- Need to explore ways to make projects affordable and achievable in this neighborhood
- Incentives to improve the neighborhood.
- Maintain the single family character of the neighborhood.
- Maintain setbacks and spacing between housing.
- The “rhythm” of the houses along the street is important to honor.
- “Characteristic” – acknowledge that we have multi-family in places
- Encourage front porches that address street, transit, etc.
- No block walls; no gated community.
- Preserve the neighborhood character. 1940s, 1950, etc. type of development.
- This plan ensures that the area is recognized as community asset.
- Lots should not be assembled for development.
- Down-zoning for R-2-R-3 → R-1 by city or owner should occur.
- Better utilization of front yards.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) – like them under certain circumstances.
- ADU only when it counts toward density.
- Focus on an economic development program scaled to neighborhood.
- Some areas are “enchanted” places to be, and others are not well built. One needs to be preserved while the other needs enhancements.

Traffic/Transportation

- Traffic is only going to get worse.
- Traffic implications should be thought about before additional density is approved – look at traffic impact studies being done.
- There is no enforcement of speed.
- Automobiles divert through neighborhoods due to traffic backup on main arterials.

- Traffic calming measures should be considered that make it more difficult to get into neighborhood. Consider providing more stop signs or blocking off one side of the street during certain times.
- Move the railroad switching north to SRP
- I am against traffic calming. Since the traffic calming projects, traffic has gotten worse. We are getting traffic frustration. Maybe the city is using the wrong traffic calming techniques. Experience of our neighborhood traffic has gotten worse.
- Reclaiming our streets "Safe in the Street". We are tied to the downtown and therefore are impacted.
- Streets are "places" and should be designed as such. There is a "visual hierarchy of streets" that should be respected. Creating a "place" with the street should be considered.
- Implement University Drive Plan – do something.

Parking

- Parking regulations should be addressed.
- Parking should be based on use studies.
- Review shared-use parking regulations.

Linkage to Downtown and ASU

- The Downtown Tempe Corporation (DTC) needs to recognize that the neighborhood is an important component of downtown.
- If density is going to be given in the downtown, then there needs to be requirement for traffic mitigation. Tie it to alternate modes.
- There should be an appropriate transition from downtown, ASU, and Rio Salado to the neighborhood (e.g., scale, design, uses, and circulation). How do you make the lifestyle more enjoyable to more people without it negatively impacting the neighborhood?
- Consider complimentary development in terms of density as well as continuity of development in downtown and ASU.
- Articulate the vision of this area in relationship to the downtown. This is somewhere special.
- Better connection between neighborhood and university.

Infrastructure

- Infrastructure needs to support new development intensification, i.e., storm drainage, etc., sewer, water treatment, and public safety.
- Enhance public facilities – parks, swimming pools, streets.
- Relocate the Dog Park -Mitchell Park or Clark Park.

Affordable Housing/Rental Housing

- City of Tempe should have an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with ASU to keep students contained on campus. ASU should provide affordable student housing and not the neighborhood.
- Behavior of renters is the problem.
- Affordable Housing to preserve ethnic and diversity composition
- Back down on restoration regulations and permitting; make it affordable and get rid of the “hoops” – when it is difficult people bypass building safety, etc., because it is so restrictive.

Landscaping

- Maintaining irrigation and grass in the existing areas is important. Define that certain neighborhoods have water rights that go with the property.
- Areas without irrigation rights should be xeriscape landscaping.
- Tempe should remain as an urban “cool” oasis.
- A permit should be required to take out a tree over a certain size.
- Reduce width of residential streets to allow landscaping, etc.
- Preserve sidewalk setbacks to allow a tree line between sidewalk and street.
- Implement street tree program.

Heritage

- Extreme sensitivity to and adjacent to the Farmer Goodwin House
- Acknowledge the value of the historic character of the area. Concerned it will be lost; it will be a tremendous loss to the community. The area is a tremendous asset to the community.
- Pursue designation as a historic area.
- Adopt historic building codes.
- Not every house is historic, and there is real “junk” in the area too. We should also be concerned about design quality of new development.

Sustainability

- Encourage water catchment off roofs.
- Encourage energy harvesting. The neighborhood could buy and sell energy on the open market.
- Mitchell Park – go solar.
- Sustainability should be encouraged. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) alternative building construction should be encouraged. Reference LEED, LEED-ND for neighborhood sustainable development.

Art

- Public art should be encouraged throughout the neighborhood.
- Encourage an artist in residency program for Mitchell School.

Mitchell School

- Mitchell School should be designed for an interactive use with neighborhood.
- It should not be used as a warehouse.

Paths, Trails and Sidewalks

- "Network" of paths should be developed.
- Implement a scheduled maintenance of sidewalks. There needs to be sidewalk upgrades.
- Provide pedestrian links to regional transit, local goods and services, and public facilities.

Alleys

- Improve alley conditions. It depends on the location if they are kept but most need to be improved.
- Pave alleys when applicable.

Lighting

- Lighting should be sensitive and pedestrian scale.
- Improved, reduced light source type of lighting that has less glare and no light leakage.

Safety

- Neighborhood character should override Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).
- Current parks and utilities upgraded to meet CPTED have impacted our quality of life and livability of the neighborhood (e.g. lighting and less plant quality).
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and CPTED contradict.

Noise

- Downtown concert volumes are too loud.
- Noise overall from trains, airplanes, etc. is tremendous. There needs to be guidelines.
- Fire trucks are going through this neighborhood to get to other areas.

Representation

- Neighborhood representation – How do we define a cohesive voice?
- It is important to get people to participate and encourage them to be fully knowledgeable.
- Communications with the neighborhood need to be improved.
- Consider the Village Concept that weighs people's opinions in the areas closer to the projects; they are listened to more, because they are subject to impacts of a development.
- Strengthen neighborhood association.
- Notification only to Association chairs is not acceptable.

13th Street Improvements

- 13th Street improvements have made the area better.
- No follow-up to the redesign of 13th St.

Design

- A development's impact on the neighborhood's quality of life should be evaluated.
- The context of the design should be prioritized over property rights.
- It should be the responsibility of the developer to show how the development applies to Northwest Tempe's quality of life and character.

Plan Direction

- A lot of the detail needs to be in the document that has already been identified.

D. Next Steps

Peggy thanked everyone for attending. She said that meeting summary notes will be completed and included on the website. Everyone will be invited to attend a town hall meeting after the DRAFT Plan is completed. The purpose of the town hall will be to review the DRAFT Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

City Staff Present:	Jeff Kuluga, City of Tempe Community Relations
Consultant Present:	Peggy Fiandaca, Partners for Strategic Action, Inc.

**NORTHWEST TEMPE COMMUNITY PLAN
FOCUS GROUP PROCESS 2005
SUMMARY OF MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE**

Participants were asked to complete the following questionnaire and turn it in before they left. Following is a summary of the responses.

17 people attended (excluding staff); 10 questionnaires were received and the following input provided:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Group Size	2		7	1
Meeting Facilities		4	5	1
Length of Focus Group		1	7	2
Facilitator			6	4

What did you like most about the Northwest Tempe Community Plan Focus Group process?

Focused on public input
 Lots of good ideas
 Use of brainstorm in fluid way
 Reiterating our planning ideas
 Open discussion
 Everyone was heard
 Opportunity to plan our neighborhood
 Creative synergy

Is there anything that you would have done differently during the Focus Group process?

Review and incorporate appropriate elements of "Strategic Plan"
 That past focus groups' information should be implemented. I'm tired of going through this process with no results.
 Pick a topic and go around the group for comment in a regular fashion – you won't have to remember who is next.
 No, nothing different. (2)
 Start at 7:00 instead of 6:30 p.m.

Should the process continue to be used to educate citizens and receive input from the community?

Yes, community input is essential.
 Yes, we should be thinking about where our neighborhoods are going.
 Yes, People's issues are different – pluralistic. We had a process which recognizes, reflects this. Issue – what happens next – how do you categorize issues mentioned?

Yes, actually do something.
Yes, good simple format.
Yes (3).
No (1).

What was the most important topic you heard today that the Northwest Tempe Community Plan should address?

Preserve and appreciate the character of much of Northwest Tempe neighborhood.
Community/process/truthful dialogue.
Traffic and planning with the thought to implications.
How would we like to see the neighborhood evolve – proactive.
Previous process flawed.
Process, “neighbor” hood driven planning.
Probably traffic or growth and water.
Respect for public input and values by the city, developers, etc.